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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003293

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SUBJECT: "UNITED DAILY NEWS" EDITORIAL ON TAIWAN'S CROSS-STRAIT POLICY

Summary: The pro-unification "United Daily News" urged in an August 5, 2005, editorial that the government implement a more proactive cross-strait policy, liberalize the three direct links as soon as possible, and not only make partial policy decisions. The following is a full text translation of the editorial by AIT's Public Affairs Section.

"`Loud Thunder Overriding Firecrackers': a Macroscopic way of Thinking for Cross-Strait Policy"

Taiwan fruit exportation to the mainland has brought the government into an embarrassing position, in which it was first supercilious and then deferential as well as threatening in manner but cowardly at heart.

In order to break through the dilemma, the Executive Yuan (EY) made several policy announcements, including opening up Taiwan to mainland tourists, promoting Penghu as a transfer point for cross-strait transportation, allowing Taiwan aircraft to fly over China's airspace, and agreeing to negotiate with China simultaneously on chartered flights for passengers and cargo.

When put into perspective, the authority has been so insistent on "small matters," such as fruit exports to the mainland, with repetitive mentioning of "sovereignty," "united front tactics," and "traps," however it has maintained a positive attitude toward the obviously more complicated "bigger matters" such as opening up Taiwan to mainland tourists, promoting Penghu as a transfer point, and allowing aircraft from Taiwan to fly over China's airspace. One did not hear warnings about "sovereignty," "united front tactics," or "traps."

Although this is certainly self-contradictory, it is the correct direction for development. Under the macroscopic structure of cross-strait interactions, fruit exportation is only a "small matter." Unfortunately, the government has been caught in a very embarrassing, passive situation, because of inappropriate operations. In order to seek a breakthrough, the authorities have placed their hopes of regaining control of the negotiation of relatively higher-level matters, which involves a wider range of issues, such as cross-strait chartered flights. This kind of "resolving of the small by the large" or "changing from passive to active" strategic way of thinking is the right direction for development.

There is a good metaphor: cross-strait policies in the past were like setting off firecrackers sporadically. This cannot change the general atmosphere. It is necessary at this time to make major moves similar to "loud thunders overriding firecrackers" so that the sound of firecrackers can be silenced and the bigger picture be turned around.

From Lee Teng-hui to Chen Shui-bian, [our] cross-strait policy in recent years has generally been like "seeing the small rather than the large" and "seeing only the trees rather than the forest." It seems that [we are] "trying to keep every inch of the territories." But, in fact, [we have been] "losing inch by inch." The policy is superficially "no haste, be patient" but in reality "the people are hasty and can not wait." Now, the magnetic effect from across the Strait has moved from high technology to agricultural products. The authorities seem to be finally alerted, for the first time, that the trees have been destroyed, and that the whole "forest" is caught in a storm now. At this crucial moment, although it is already too late to adopt the "loud thunders overriding firecrackers" and "resolving the small by the large" way of strategic thinking, it is still better than being impenetrably thickheaded.

Therefore, while the government keeps nagging about Taiwan's fruit going to the mainland and saying it is a disgrace to "sovereignty," or that farmers should be cautious of "traps," we should turn our attention to promoting Penghu as a transfer point for cross-strait transportation or simultaneous negotiations with China on chartered flights. This is because nagging about fruits is "virtual," "small," and "partial." Allowing aircraft of Taiwan to fly over China's airspace and having simultaneous negotiations with China on chartered flights are "substantive," "big," and

"general." This is the "thunder overriding firecrackers" tactic.

In fact, the reason why fruit exports to the mainland cannot be prevented is that this big trend cannot be stopped. The way to respond is never to obstinately focus on the fruits, but to reexamine and make changes as well as to re-recognize and control the bigger trend and situation. Not to "see only the trees without the forest." So the EY's several just-in-time major policy turnarounds should be applauded. But there is also much to be done.

First, the policy goals should be elevated to the level of the "three direct links." For example, the transitional period for weekend chartered flights should not be too long. The goal should be moving toward "regular flights" as soon as possible. Also, the idea for Penghu to be a transfer point is nothing but a "partial" viewpoint. If the three direct links will be implemented sooner or later, then there is no need to waste Penghu's time. Furthermore, one has learned from Kinmen and Matsu's "mini three links" that, with its economic and social conditions, Penghu's opening as a transfer point may not be beneficial to the country as a whole. Instead, this will quickly increase Penghu's dependence on the mainland, just as what has happened to Kinmen and Matsu. This definitely cannot be considered a good strategy. As a result, we should give up the "maintaining partial and harming the whole" way of thinking and adopt the "stabilizing the whole to save the partial" strategy.

The so-called "stabilizing the whole to save the partial" strategy is to implement the "three direct links" as soon as possible and try our best to pursue the goal of developing Taiwan into an "Asian-Pacific platform." Only then can we build a so-called "cross-Strait peaceful and stable interactive development framework." Regarding the political dimensions, we should realize that there is no possibility for "name rectification and a new constitution" or "de jure Taiwan independence." Taiwan should play the role of "a beacon for democracy and freedom" and maintain a relationship of mutual encouragement and mutual appreciation with the 1.3 billion people on the mainland. It is really not appropriate for those in charge of political affairs to face the 1.3 billion mainlanders as "Taiwan independence activists". This will only intensify cross-Strait hatred. Only by doing this can cross-Strait economic and political interactions gradually bring about mutually beneficial results. Taiwan can thereby avoid the predication of continual marginalization of its economy and the increasing political hostility toward the other side across the Strait.

[Our] cross-Strait policy is in a difficult circumstance now. The authorities cannot indulge themselves in the practice of dealing with fruits when fruit farmers want to go to the mainland or deal with Penghu when Penghu wants to participate in mini three links. It must conduct overall planning and operations on [a wide range of issues] from constitutional thinking of "non-Taiwan independence" to the interactive mechanism of the "three direct links." Only by doing so can the authority restructure the bigger situation and avoid repeating the awkwardness of being unable to handle too many problems at the same time.

If the big noise of loud thunder is lacking, then no matter how many firecrackers are set off, it will be impossible to change the destined cross-Strait trend and situation.

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